

*With compliments from*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY,

**Indian National Congress**

*Not to be published before the morning  
of 2nd August 1931*

**Indian National Congress**

**REPORT**

**OF THE**

**National Flag Committee**

To

The President,

All India Congress Committee.

Sir,

At a meeting of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress held on the 2nd April 1931 at Karachi, the following resolution was passed appointing a Committee of seven persons to examine the objections to the existing flag and recommend a flag for the acceptance of the Congress:—

“Whereas the National Flag now in vogue has gained a popularity by usage and convention and whereas objection has been taken to the three colours in the Flag on the ground that they are conceived on a communal basis, the Working Committee hereby appoints the following as a Committee for the purpose of examining the objections and recommending a Flag for the acceptance of the Congress. The Committee shall have the authority to take such evidence as it may consider necessary and to send its report and recommendations to the Working Committee on or before the 31st July 1931.”

1. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,
2. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad,
3. Master Tara Singh,
4. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru,
5. Principal D. B. Kalelker,
6. Dr. N. S. Hardiker, and
7. Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya (*Convener*).

Soon afterwards the following questionnaire was prepared by the Committee and circulated widely:—

1. Is there any feeling amongst any group of people or community in your province, in regard to the design of the National Flag, which in your opinion should be taken into consideration by the Committee?
2. Have you any specific suggestions for making the Flag more popular?
3. Is there any defect or drawback in the design now in vogue which you consider demands attention?

The various Provincial Congress Committees were addressed directly and the public were approached through the press, while the members of the All India Congress Committee were individually addressed by the A. I. C. C. Office. In response to this questionnaire eight Provincial Congress Committees, namely Andhra, Behar, Bombay (City), Karnataka, Sind, Tamil Nad, Utkal and U. P. and fifty individuals and the Executive Committee of the Central Sikh League have sent up memoranda. Although the time fixed for the receipt of replies expired on 1st June, they continued to be received till 5th July.

A meeting of the Flag Committee was convened during the sittings of the Working Committee in Bombay (from 7th July forwards). Two sittings were held on the 8th and 9th July. On the first day all the members attended the meeting and on the second all but Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. We had the advantage of Sardar Sardul Singh's presence at both the sittings. We felt that no oral evidence was necessary.

The task before the Committee was recognized to be both difficult and delicate. There was a consensus of opinion both in the Committee and in the public that responded to the questionnaire that the colours of the Flag should not bear any communal significance. While it is true that the Congress never countenanced any communal interpretation of the colours of the Flag, the fact remains that when it was originally conceived the two colours chosen namely red and green, were selected on this basis and stood for the Hindu and Muslim communities, and later the white colour was added, being meant to stand for the remaining communities of India. The Sikhs had all along objected to this assortment of colours and in December 1929 led a deputation before Mahatma Gandhi urging the inclusion of a colour for their community in the existing flag or asking for a flag which was non-communal. Ever since there has been some measure of objection taken to the Flag on this account and this Committee was appointed to examine the objections to it and recommend a Flag acceptable to the Congress.

The Committee are unanimous in holding that the colours of the Flag should not bear any communal significance. The question then is whether a declaration to that effect should not satisfy the public as well as those

who have objected to the existing colours or whether a continuance of the colours would in spite of the declaration lead to a misunderstanding of their significance. Latterly, it is true, various interpretations have been given to these colours, some æsthetic and some psychological, but the Committee have felt that as the existing colours have been associated in the minds of the public—more especially in the Punjab—with a communal interpretation, however vaguely and unauthorisedly, it will be difficult to think of these colours or their significance apart from such association. In this view then a total change of colours seems called for and in thus contemplating a wholesale change the Committee are not unaware of the measure of sentiment that has grown around the existing flag. It has been urged that this is the flag round which the cause of non-cooperation grew and developed, that this was the flag for which hundreds went to jail in Nagpur and finally that this is the flag for which and under which the great non-violent fight of 1930-31 took place with such glorious results. These arguments seem irresistible, but at the same time, it may be noted that all the sentiment and passion that has developed round the flag these 10 years, has developed not round a particular set of colours or a particular design but round the concept of the flag as the symbol of nationalism, national aspiration and sacrifice for the cause of national freedom. The national flag is always the rallying point for the nation through storm and sunshine and will continue to be so no matter what colours it bears and what design it adopts. It is in this view, and it is with great reluctance that most of us contemplate the change from a flag that has become dear and sacred to us and to millions of our countrymen and country-women to a new emblem which has no association with our struggles and sufferings and victories.

Moreover the Committee recognize that the existing colours of the flag without charkha make it identical with that of Bulgaria, while the suggestion that the white should be transposed to the middle would make it identical with that of Persia. Thus apart from any communal significance, the colours of the existing flag, we feel, cannot commend themselves to our acceptance on account of their similarity to those of two other countries in the world. It will be argued, of course, that the charkha as the device on the tri-colour flag would give it an individu-

ality which should avoid all confusion. That is true, but the emergencies of political struggle and public life have demanded the improvisation of a flag on all important occasions and it is a matter of general knowledge that the tri-colour flag by itself has been more often adopted as the National Flag than one with the charkha on it. Accordingly in recommending a new flag it is necessary to avoid all scope for confusion and to conceive a composite scheme of colours and device that will not be separated from each other.

It remains for the committee now to approach the question of colours and device for the National Flag wholly from an æsthetic and heraldic standpoint. We feel the flag must be distinctive, artistic, rectangular and non-communal. Opinion has been unanimous that our National Flag should be of a single colour except for the colour of the device. If there is one colour that is more acceptable to the Indians as a whole, even as it is more distinctive than another, one that is associated with this ancient country by long tradition, it is the *kesari* or saffron colour. Accordingly it is felt that the flag should be of the *kesari* colour except for the colour of the device. That the device should be the charkha is unanimously agreed to. Various other devices have been suggested in place of or in addition to the charkha—namely plough, lotus flower and so on. But the charkha is really the device round which our national movement has grown these ten years and its importance should not be lessened by the addition of any other device. We have then to select the colour of the device. The Committee have come to the conclusion that the charka should be in blue. Accordingly we recommend that the National Flag should be of *kesari* or saffron colour having on it at the left top quarter the charkha in blue with the wheel towards the flagstaff, the proportions of the flag being fly to hoist as three to two.

Yours obediently,

(Sd.) Vallabhbhai Patel  
 (Sd.) Abdul Kalam Azad  
 (Sd.) Tarasingh  
 (Sd.) Jawaharlal Nehru  
 (Sd.) D. B. Kalelkar  
 (Sd.) N. S. Hardiker  
 (Sd.) B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya

(Convenor)

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